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METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR CHARACTERIZATION OF THERMAL

RESPONSE OF GMR SENSORS IN MAGNETIC HEADS FOR DISK DRIVES

RELATED APPLICATIONS

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The present application is related to commonly assigned and co-pending U.S. Patent Application Serial Nos. _____, Attorney Docket No. AUS9-2000-0353-US1

10   entitled "Method and Apparatus for Measuring Thermal and Electrical Properties of Thermoelectric Materials," _____, Attorney Docket No. AUS9-2000-0354-US1 entitled "Probe Apparatus and Method for Measuring Thermoelectric Properties of Materials," both filed on _____ and both

15   hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1.   Technical Field:

20   The present invention is directed to a method and apparatus for characterization of a thermal response of giant magnetoresistive (GMR) sensors in magnetic heads for disk drives.

25 ### 2.   Description of Related Art:

The requirement of high density magnetic storage of data on hard disk drives has been increasing steadily for the past several years. Hard disk drives include magnetic heads for reading and writing data to the hard

30   disk. The magnetic heads include write coils and sensors for reading data from the disks.

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Development of magnetoresistive (MR) sensors (also referred to as heads) for disk drives in the early 1990's allowed disk drive products to maximize storage capacity with a minimum number of components (heads and disks).

5   Fewer components result in lower storage costs, higher reliability, and lower power requirements for the hared disk drives.

MR sensors are used for the read element of a read/write head on a high-density magnetic disk. MR

10   sensors read magnetically encoded information from the magnetic medium of the disk by detecting magnetic flux stored in the magnetic medium of the disk. As storage capacity of disk drives has increased, the storage bit has gotten smaller and its magnetic field has

15   correspondingly become weaker. MR heads are more sensitive to weaker magnetic fields than are the inductive read coils used in earlier disk drives. Thus, there has been a move away from inductive read coils to MR sensors for use in disk drives.

20   During operation of the hard disk drive, sense current is passed through the MR element of the sensor causing a voltage drop. The magnitude of the voltage drop is a function of the resistance of the MR element. Resistance of the MR element varies in the presence of a

25   magnetic field. Therefore, as the magnitude of the magnetic field flux passing through the MR element varies, the voltage across the MR element also varies. Differences in the magnitude of the magnetic flux entering the MR sensor can be detected by monitoring the

30   voltage across the MR element.

As discussed above, MR sensors are known to be useful in reading data with a sensitivity exceeding that

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of inductive or other thin film sensors. However, the development of Giant Magnetoresistive (GMR) sensors (also referred to as GMR head chips) has greatly increased the sensitivity and the ability to read densely packed data.

5   Thus, although the storage density for MR disks is expected to eventually reach 5 gigabits per square inch of surface disk drive (Gbits/sq.in.), the storage density of GMR disks is expected to exceed 100 Gbits/sq.in.

The GMR effect utilizes a spacer layer of a

10 non-magnetic metal between two magnetic metals. The non-magnetic metal is chosen to ensure that coupling between magnetic layers is weak. GMR disk drive sensors (or head chips) operate at low magnetic layers. When the magnetic alignment of the magnetic layers is parallel,

15 the overall resistance is relatively low. When the magnetic alignment of the layers is anti-parallel, the overall resistance is relatively high. *When the sensor is biased with a constant current source, the change in resistance results in a change of voltage ("signal*

20 *voltage") across the GMR sensor. For a given GMR technology, the signal voltage is proportional to the amount of current passed through the GMR sensor. The* current passing through the GMR sensor affects the temperature of the GMR sensor and thus, the thermal noise

25 *voltages. Large currents result in significant temperature change, and a large increase in the noise voltages. As* the temperature increases, the *ratio of signal voltage to noise voltage* is reduced. Th*is* signal to noise ratio *determines* the bandwidth achievable by the

30 GMR sensor.

Because GMR sensors allow extremely high data densities on disk drives, a stable sensor is essential to

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accurate read and write operations in high track density
hard disk drives. It is known that temperature increases
may cause the GMR sensor within the GMR element to
exhibit unstable magnetic properties and efforts to
5 reduce the temperature within the disk drive are ongoing.

As the requirements for the GMR sensors have been
increasing over the years, the requirements for the write
coils within the disk drives have also been increasing.
New disk drives require fast field reversal during the
10 write operation. This requirement for fast field
reversal during the write operation implies larger write
currents for gigahertz operation. Also, as the storage
densities increase, the media coercivity has to increase
to avoid thermal instability and the superparamagnetic
15 limit. This also implies that larger write currents are
necessary. However, large write currents increase the
Joule heating in the coil such that the coil temperatures
are commonly 40 to 80 degrees Celsius above ambient
temperatures. However, for optimal operation, the write
20 coils need to be kept near ambient temperatures.

Several passive and active cooling methods have been
proposed to reduce the temperatures in the magnetic
heads. These methods and designs require accurate
determination of the thermal conductivity and/or
25 microscale temperature characterization. The traditional
thermal characterization methods cannot be easily
extended to microscopic characterization because of
increased parasitic losses associated with the magnetic
head probes.
30 Scanning thermal microscopy (SThM) is a promising
technique for microscale thermal characterization and has
been recently used for this application. Unfortunately,

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the SThM methods proposed do not yield accurate
temperature profiles. There is a substantial drop in
temperature between the probe tip and the GMR/dielectric
surface due to interface impedance. Hence it is
5 difficult to calculate the thermal conductivities of
these low thermal conductivity thin film materials.

Thus, there is a need for a mechanism by which
thermal conductivities of low thermal conductivity thin
film materials can be accurately calculated for use in
10 thermal management of magnetic read/write heads.

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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A method and apparatus for characterization of a
thermal response of giant magnetoresistive (GMR) sensors
in magnetic read/write heads is provided. The method and
apparatus make use of a probe to measure temperatures at
a base and a tip of the probe. With the method and
apparatus, the temperature of the magnetic shields of the
read/write head is reduced to a temperature lower than
the probe temperature. A current is then applied to the
GMR sensor to increase the temperature at an air bearing
surface until the heat flow through the probe is zero.
The amount of current applied, the resistance of the GMR
sensor, the magnetic shield temperature, and the ambient
temperature are used to calculate the thermal conductance
of the dielectric material in the read/write head. The
thermal conductance is then utilized to estimate the
signal to noise ratio of the GMR sensor and thereby
determine a maximum bandwidth of the read/write head.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The novel features believed characteristic of the
invention are set forth in the appended claims. The
invention itself, however, as well as a preferred mode of
use, further objectives and advantages thereof, will best
be understood by reference to the following detailed
description of an illustrative embodiment when read in
conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

Figure 1 depicts a block diagram of a data
processing system in which the present invention may be
implemented;

Figure 2 depicts a cut-away, top plan view of a data
storage system in accordance with the present invention;

Figures 3A and **3B** are exemplary block diagrams
illustrating a GMR sensor in a magnetic read/write head;

Figure 4 is an exemplary diagram illustrating a
probe in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 5 is an exemplary cross-sectional view of the
probe in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 6 is an exemplary circuit diagram
illustrating the thermocouples of the probe;

Figures 7 and **8** are diagrams illustrating two
methods of performing the calibration in accordance with
the present invention;

Figure 9 is an exemplary graph of voltage versus
temperature at the tip of the probe, the relationship
having been obtained from temperature calibration of the
probe;

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Figure 10 is an exemplary diagram that illustrates the basic method of heat calibration in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 11 is an exemplary graph of Θ versus
5   temperature differential, the relationship having been obtained from heat flow calibration of the probe tip; and

Figure 12 is an exemplary block diagram illustrating the use of a probe to measure thermal conductance of a dielectric material in a magnetic read/write head; and

10   Figure 13 is a graph of Θ versus current for a magnetic read/write head under test.

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

With reference now to the figures, and in particular
5   with reference to **Figure 1**, a block diagram of a data
processing system in which the present invention may be
implemented is illustrated. Data processing system **100**
is an example of a client computer. Data processing
system **100** employs a peripheral component interconnect
10   (PCI) local bus architecture. Although the depicted
example employs a PCI bus, other bus architectures, such
as Micro Channel and ISA, may be used. Processor **102** and
main memory **104** are connected to PCI local bus **106**
through PCI bridge **108**. PCI bridge **108** may also include
15   an integrated memory controller and cache memory for
processor **102**. Additional connections to PCI local bus
106 may be made through direct component interconnection
or through add-in boards. In the depicted example, local
area network (LAN) adapter **110**, SCSI host bus adapter
20   **112**, and expansion bus interface **114** are connected to PCI
local bus **106** by direct component connection. In
contrast, audio adapter **116**, graphics adapter **118**, and
audio/video adapter (A/V) **119** are connected to PCI local
bus **106** by add-in boards inserted into expansion slots.
25   Expansion bus interface **114** provides a connection for a
keyboard and mouse adapter **120**, modem **122**, and additional
memory **124**. In the depicted example, SCSI host bus
adapter **112** provides a connection for hard disk drive
126, tape drive **128**, CD-ROM drive **130**, and digital video
30   disc read only memory drive (DVD-ROM) **132.** Typical PCI

local bus implementations will support three or four PCI expansion slots or add-in connectors.

An operating system runs on processor **102** and is used to coordinate and provide control of various

5   components within data processing system **100** in **Figure 1**. The operating system may be a commercially available operating system, such as OS/2, which is available from International Business Machines Corporation. "OS/2" is a trademark of International Business Machines Corporation.

10   An object oriented programming system, such as Java, may run in conjunction with the operating system, providing calls to the operating system from Java programs or applications executing on data processing system **100**. Instructions for the operating system, the

15   object-oriented operating system, and applications or programs are located on a storage device, such as hard disk drive **126**, and may be loaded into main memory **104** for execution by processor **102**.

Those of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate

20   that the hardware in **Figure 1** may vary depending on the implementation. For example, other peripheral devices, such as optical disk drives and the like, may be used in addition to or in place of the hardware depicted in **Figure 1**. The depicted example is not meant to imply

25   architectural limitations with respect to the present invention. For example, the processes of the present invention may be applied to multiprocessor data processing systems.

With reference now to **Figure 2**, a cut-away, top plan

30   view of a data storage system is depicted in accordance with the present invention. Data storage system **200** is an example of a data storage system which may be

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implemented as a disk drive such as, for example, disk drive **126** in **Figure 1**. Data storage system **200** includes a housing **201** containing at least one rotatable data storage disk **202** supported on a spindle **205** and rotated

5   by a drive motor (not shown). Typically, a data storage system will comprise a plurality of disks and a slider **206** with a read/write head **204** for each disk. As an example, in a magnetic disk storage device, each data storage disk **202** has the capability of receiving and

10   retaining data, through the use of a magnetic recording medium formed on at least one disk surface **203**, where the magnetic recording medium is arranged in an annular pattern of multiple concentric data tracks **208**. Though only a few data tracks **208** are shown, it is known that

15   the number of tracks varies according to at least the recording medium and the read/write head **204**. At least one slider **206**, including one or more read/write heads **204** is positioned over data storage disk **202**. Slider **206** is suspended from an actuator arm (not shown) by a

20   suspension (also not shown) and the radial position of slider **206** with respect to data tracks **208** of data storage disk **202**, is controlled by a voice coil motor (not shown).

     During operation of data storage system **200**, the

25   rotation of data storage disk **202** generates an air bearing between slider **206** and disk surface **203**. The air bearing counterbalances a slight downward-biased spring force of the suspension and supports slider **206** above disk surface **203** by a small, substantially constant

30   spacing. As disk **202** is rotated by the drive motor, slider **206** is moved radially in and out in response to

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the movement of the actuator arm by the voice coil motor,
permitting read/write head **204** to read and write data
from and to the concentric tracks **208**. Though only one
read/write head **204** and slider **206** assembly is shown, it
5   is well known that a plurality of sliders **206** may be
employed to access a plurality of disks **202**, stacked one
atop the other on spindle **205**.

The temperature of read/write head **204** may rise
during operation of data storage drive **200** due to
10   previously discussed magnetic field changes and ambient
conditions in data storage system **200**. During operation,
read/write head **204**, passes through magnetic field
changes induced by stored data in the magnetic medium of
disk **202**. Temperature increases in read/write head **204**
15   may be the result of many different causes including
Joule heating of the sensing current, frictional
asperities, the magnetic field changes encountered while
passing over the surface of disk **202**, and the like. As
read/write head **204** passes over magnetically encoded data
20   in the form of bits, the changing magnetic fields
encountered by read/write head **204** causes head resistance
to change, which generates heat within read/write head
204. Magnetic instability may arise in read/write head
204 due to increasing read/write head **204** temperatures.
25   Magnetic instability causes noise and, concurrently,
distortions in a current flow pattern in an active region
(area (not shown) between bias field conductors of
read/write head **204**). A thermoelectric cooling (TEC)
device, may be mounted in close proximity to read/write
30   head **204** to provide an active heat transfer device.
Also, the TEC device may utilize a separate power source

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or in very low temperature conditions, the same power
source as the read/write head **204**.

Figures **3A** and **3B** show cross sections of a magnetic

5   head **300** having a giant magnetoresistive (GMR) sensor
310. As shown in **Figure 3A**, the magnetic head **300**
includes a yoke **305**, a GMR sensor **310**, coils **315**, layered
dielectrics **320**, and magnetic shields **325**. The magnetic
head **300** is positioned above a spinning magnetic disk **330**

10   with a gap **335** allowing for air flow between the magnetic
head **300** and the spinning disk **330**. The coils **315**
generate a magnetic field for writing data to the
spinning disk **330**. The coils **315** are wrapped around yoke
305 which focuses the magnetic field created by the coils

15   **315**. The GMR sensor **310** is used for reading data from
the spinning disk **330**. The layered dielectrics **320** are
used as an insulator for insulating the GMR sensor **310**
from the magnetic shields **325**. The magnetic shields **325**
shield the write operations of the coils **315** from the

20   read operations of the GMR sensor **310**.

Figure **3B** shows a magnified view of the GMR sensor
310 from the air bearing surface (**ABS**), such as
represented by arrows **338**. The GMR sensor **310** is
positioned between two electrical leads **340**. The GMR

25   sensor **310** is also sandwiched between dielectrics **320** and
magnetic shields **325**.

The GMR sensor **310** typically operates at
approximately 50 degrees Celsius above the spinning disk
ambient temperature. Most temperature drops occur within

30   the GMR sensor **310** layers and the ultra-thin alumina

dielectrics **320** between the GMR sensor **310** and the magnetic shields **325**. The present invention provides a method and apparatus for accurately characterizing the thermal conditions of the GMR sensor **310** at the tip of

5 the magnetic head **300**.

The present invention provides a method and apparatus for measuring and characterizing the thermal and electrical properties of GMR sensors in magnetic read/write heads. The invention makes use of temperature

10 sensors, such as thermocouples and thermistors, for thermal probes and uses a surface electrode at the thermal probe tip for making electrical measurements on a sample of the thermoelectric material.

The preferred embodiment of the present invention

15 makes use of two thermocouples as the temperature sensors of the present invention. However, it should be appreciated that the present invention may use other types of temperatures sensors to measure the temperature values at various points on the probe without departing

20 from the spirit and scope of the present invention. For example, rather than two thermocouples, the present invention may use one or more thermistors in place of or in addition to one or more of the thermocouples of the preferred embodiment. For purposes of illustration,

25 however, the present invention will be described in terms of a probe having two thermocouples which are used to measure temperature.

While the present invention will be described in terms of using a particular type of probe to measure heat

30 flow through the surface of a read/write magnetic head, the invention is not limited to this particular probe design. Rather, any probe that is capable of measuring

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heat flow may be used without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention. The preferred embodiments, however, make use of a probe having the configuration and operational abilities herein described.

5   **Figure 4** is an exemplary diagram illustrating two views of a probe **400** in accordance with the present invention. The probe shown in **Figure 4** is used to measure the thermoelectric properties of thermoelectric materials in a manner described in detail hereafter. The

10   probe in **Figure 4** makes use of two thermocouples to provide measurements of temperature that are then used to calculate thermoelectric properties of the thermoelectric material sample under test.

As shown in **Figure 4**, the probe **400** includes a

15   cantilever substrate structure **410**, a first lead **420**, a second lead **430**, a third lead **440**, a fourth lead **445**, a reflector **450**, and a cone **460**. The leads **420-445** create two thermocouples which are used, in a manner to be described hereafter, to measure the temperature of the

20   probe tip (cone **460** tip) and the temperature of a sample material. From these measurements, the thermoelectrical properties of the sample material may be determined.

The reflector **450** is used to reflect a laser beam toward a detector (not shown). The laser beam, reflector

25   **450** and detector are used to measure the deflection of the cantilever structure **410** in order to maintain the distance between the probe tip **460** and the sample material at a constant value.

Figure 5 is an exemplary cross section of the probe

30   tip **460**. As shown in **Figur 5**, the probe tip **460** is comprised of a number of different layers of material.

The particular materials described hereafter with reference to the exemplary embodiment are meant to be for illustrative purposes and other materials having similar properties may be used in replacement or in addition to

5   the materials described herein without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention.

The formation of the probe tip **460** will now be described with reference to **Figure 5**. The formation of the probe tip **460** is generally described in the

10   incorporated co-pending U.S. Patent Application Serial Nos. _____ (Attorney Docket No. AUS9-2000-0353-US1) and _____ (Attorney Docket No. AUS9-2000-0354-US1). The mechanisms used to create the various layers of the probe, such as deposition and etching, are generally

15   known in the art of semiconductor chip manufacture. However, these mechanisms have not previously been used to create the structure herein described.

The cantilever substrate **410** is created first and is comprised of a silicon or silicon nitride material. A

20   silicon oxide cone **460** is formed on the cantilever substrate **410**. A secondary metal layer is then created over the substrate **410** and the cone **460**. The secondary metal layer may be, for example, chromium, and is used to create the second lead **430** and third lead **440**.

25   It should be noted that the chromium layer does not cover all of the surface of the substrate **410** and cone **460**. Rather, as shown in **Figure 5**, a portion of the chromium layer at the base of the cone is etched away so that the two leads **430** and **440** are formed without

30   touching one another.

Once the two leads **430** and **440** are created, a
silicon oxide layer **480** is created on top of the chromium
layer. The silicon oxide layer **480** is etched at the apex
of the cone and at a point at the base of the cone to
5   create two thermocouples which will be used in the
present invention to perform thermoelectric property
measurements of sample materials.

After the silicon oxide layer **480** is created, the
primary metal layer **420** is created. The primary metal
10   layer **420** is comprised of platinum/iridium in an
exemplary embodiment, but may be any other type of metal
which may be determined to have properties especially
well suited for a particular application. As shown in
Figure 5, the primary metal layer **420** is etched away at
15   position near the base of the cone to thereby create the
first and fourth leads **420** and **445**.

The interaction of the primary and secondary metal
layers at the points where the silicon oxide layer **480**
was etched away, creates the thermocouples which are used
20   for measurements of nanoscopic material properties.
Additional layers of material may be added to the
structure shown in **Figure 5** so long as these additional
layers do not interfere with the operation of the dual
thermocouples. For example, fine wires may be added to
25   the cantilever structure **410** for heating the cantilever
structure to thereby create a temperature differential,
as will be described hereafter.

While the probe structure shown in **Figures 4** and **5**
show a cone-shaped probe tip, the probe tip may be of any
30   shape desirable. For example, the cone-shaped probe tip
may be very narrow or very wide in diameter, may have any

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value interior angle at the tip, and the like. However,
a narrower tip is preferable since the tip localizes
measured temperature fields to a smaller area and thus,
makes the probe capable of measuring thermal properties

5   of smaller scale materials.

The probe created using the process described above
can be used for making measurements in many different
applications. For example, the probe may be used to
determined the thermoelectrical characteristics of a GMR

10 sensor read/write head in a disk drive.

Those of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate
that the probe of the present invention is utilized along
with a computing system, such as, for example, the
computing system shown in **Figure 1**, in which the

15 calibration and computations described hereafter are
performed. The probe is used to provide measured
quantities which are then processed by the computing
system to calibrate the probe and generate values for the
thermoelectric properties of the materials under test.

20 Before the probe can be used to measure the
thermoelectric properties of sample materials, the probe
must be calibrated. The calibration is performed using a
sample whose thermoelectric properties are generally
known in order to obtain a relationship of thermoelectric

25 properties. The calibration method generally includes
the steps of:

1) measuring the voltages across each of the
   thermocouples;

2) measuring the temperature from a bottom lead to

30   the back side of the sample;

3) calibrating temperature according to NIST
   standards based on the above measurements; and

4) calibrating heat flow using the known
   thermoelectrical properties of the sample.

Figure 6 shows a circuit schematic for a mixed mode

5 operation probe in accordance with the present invention.
   As shown in **Figure** 6, the probe **400** consists of a first
   lead **420**, a second lead **430**, a third lead **440** and a
   fourth lead **445**. The voltage V_{t1} across the first and
   second leads **420** and **430**, connected to the thermocouple

10 at the tip **460**, are used to monitor the temperature and
   the heat flow out of the tip of the cone of the probe.
   The voltage V_{t2} across the third and fourth leads **440** and
   445, connected to the thermocouple at the base, are used
   to monitor the temperature and the heat flow at the base

15 of the cone of the probe. Based on these voltages, the
   difference in temperature ΔT_t between the tip and base of
   the cone can be calculated. Current-voltage (I-Vs)
   measurements at the first and fifth leads **420** and **630**
   characterize the electrical properties of the sample

20 **610**.

   The temperature sensors, i.e. thermocouples, at the
   tip may be calibrated in a number of different ways. In
   particular, the preferred embodiment of the present
   invention calibrates the temperature sensors at the tip

25 by scanning the probe tip over a base of a pre-calibrated
   surface and over a metal surface of a thermoelectric
   cooler **620** concurrently. For example, the pre-calibrated
   material may be a platinum base of a pre-calibrated
   silicon diode mounted on the thermoelectric cooler and

30 the metal surface may be a copper metal surface of the
   thermoelectric cooler **620**, as shown in **Figure** 7. In

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separate calibration, scanning a metal surface of a
thermoelectric cooler may be concurrently monitored by a
pre-calibrated E-type thermocouple, for example, as shown
in **Figure 8**. Regardless of the particular manner by

5   which calibration is performed, the method of temperature
calibration is essentially the same.

The temperature sensors, i.e. thermocouples, at the
tip and base of the cone **460** are used to measure voltage
values for various tip and sample temperatures. With the

10   present invention, a laser, which may be used may be used
to detect cantilever deflection of the probe **400**, is
switched OFF and the thermoelectric cooler **620** is
activated to increase and decrease the temperature of the
sample near the ambient.

15   Measurements of the voltages V_{t1} and V_{t2} are made
using the thermocouples and are used to plot a
relationship between the voltages and the temperature of
the precalibrated surface. Using National Institute of
Standards and Technology (NIST) temperature standards, a

20   relationship of voltage to temperature is identified
using known points. **Figure 9** shows an exemplary
relationship between the tip voltage and the tip
temperature. In this way, a one-to-one relation table
between the thermocouple sensor voltage V and the

25   temperature T may be obtained.

Although the above method is used in the preferred
embodiment of the present invention, other methods of
performing temperature calibration may be used with the
present invention without departing from the spirit and

30   scope of the present invention.

Once temperature calibration is performed, the
thermocouple sensors must be calibrated for measurement

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of heat flow. The heat flow calibration makes use of a
material having known thermoelectric properties. In
particular, materials having known Seebeck coefficient α
and thermal conductivity λ_k, are utilized.

5   **Figure 10** is an exemplary diagram that illustrates
the basic method of heat calibration in accordance with
the present invention. The heat flow Q from the tip to
the sample surface is calibrated by scanning the probe
tip in a contact-mode of operation over thermoelectric

10   materials, such as $Bi_{0.5}Sb_{1.5}Te_3$, $Bi_2Te_{2.9}Se_{0.1}$, ZnSb, and Bi
crystals, whose Seebeck coefficient a_{known} and thermal
conductivity λ_{known} are known. The heat flow balance
results in the following equation:

15                      $$Q_p(\Delta T_t) = G\lambda_k\Delta T_s \qquad (1)$$

where ΔT_s is the temperature drop across the sample
and G is a geometric parameter. $G \approx 2\pi a$ where a is the
"thermal" radius of the probe tip. The value for ΔT_s

20   equals the ratio of the voltage across the thermocouple
between leads **420** and **440** and the Seebeck coefficient of
the material (V/α). The open circuit voltage V_{known} is
measured across leads **420** and **630**. Thus, the equation
becomes:

25

                      $$\frac{Q_p(\Delta T_t)}{G} = \lambda_{known}(V_{known}/\alpha_{known}) \qquad (2)$$

As shown in **Figure 11**, the quantity (Q_p/G), denoted

30   by Θ, which is sometimes referred to as the normalized
heat flow, can be tabulated for standard conditions,

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e.g., when the laser used ·for monitoring deflection is turned OFF (curve a) and turned ON (curve b). $\Theta = 0$ at $T_t = 0$ when the laser is OFF, and at $T_t = \Delta T_1$ when the laser is ON. Thus, from the temperature and heat flow

5   calibrations above, the relationships V_t/T_t and $\Theta/\Delta T_t$ provide a complete thermoelectric calibration and characterization of the probe tip.

After calibration, the probe may be used to thermally characterize the GMR sensor of the read/write

10 head. **Figure 12** shows how the probe apparatus of the present invention is applied to the magnetic head of **Figure 3A** to perform thermal characterization of the GMR sensor at the tip of the magnetic head. The thermal characterization method exploits the $\Theta = 0$ condition at

15 the probe tip to measure the surface temperature. Under this condition, there is no temperature drop across the interface between the probe tip and the read/write magnetic head. The probe tip is used on the air bearing surface of the read/write magnetic head to measure

20 temperatures and determine heat flow through the probe.

In order to obtain the condition $\Theta = 0$ condition at the tip of the probe, the slider backside of the read/write magnetic head is first mounted on a thermoelectric cooler **1210** and the magnetic shields **1220**

25 of the read/write magnetic head are cooled to a temperature T_b less than the ambient temperature T_a ($T_b<T_a$ or $T_b<T_a+\Delta T_1$ if the laser in ON).

The current through the GMR sensor **1230** is then increased so that the air bearing surface (ABS) warms up

30 and a loci of points on the ABS under the magnetic head attains the condition $\Theta = 0$ when $I = I_1$. The heat flux Q_p

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through the probe tip is zero and $T_t = T_{gmr} = T_a$ (or $T_t = T_{gmr} = T_a + \Delta T_1$ if the laser is ON) on this loci (T_{gmr} is the temperature of the GMR sensor). These contours can be traced for different values of I and T_b and the entire temperature/current behavior can be obtained as shown in **Figure 13**.

In particular, when $\Theta = 0$ at the center of the GMR sensor **1230**, the entire Joule heat at the surface of the GMR sensor is conducted through the dielectric material **1215** to the magnetic shields **1220**. Hence the effective thermal conductance K between the GMR sensor **1230** and the magnetic shields **1220** can be calculated from the relation:

$$K_{eff} = (I_0^2 \, R_{gmr}) / (T_a - T_b) \qquad (3)$$

Where K_{eff} is the effective thermal conductance, I_0 is the current through the GMR sensor, R_{gmr} is the electrical resistance of the GMR sensor which may be determined by measuring the voltage across the GMR sensor, T_a is the ambient temperature, and T_b is a backplane temperature, e.g. the magnetic shield temperature. The above relationship is valid when the temperature of the GMR sensor is substantially the same as the probe tip. However, in many cases the probe tip temperature can be increased by having a heater coil in the probe. In such a case, T_a in the above relationship may be replaced by the probe tip temperature and T_b may be higher than the ambient temperature.

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Thus, the thermal conductance of the dielectric material
1215 between the GMR sensor **1230** and the magnetic shields
1220 may be obtained when the current being passed
through the GMR sensor **1230** is known, the ambient

5   temperature and the thermoelectric cooler temperature are
known, and the thermal resistance of the GMR sensor is
known. Based on the thermal conductance, the operational
behavior of the GMR sensor may be modeled in order to
manage the temperature of the magnetic read/write head.

10   By managing the temperature of the magnetic read/write
head, optimal performance of the read/write head may be
obtained.

For example, using the thermal conductance
determined using the probe mechanism described above, the

15   signal to noise ratio of the GMR sensor may be estimated.
As mentioned above, the signal to noise ratio provides a
measure of the maximum bandwidth obtainable by the GMR
sensor. Based on the maximum bandwidth of the GMR
sensor, the read speed of the read/write head can be

20   determined. The maximum bandwidth of the GMR sensor may
be determined using the relationship:

$$\Delta f \ \propto \ (\Delta R/R)^2/((1/K)+(T_b/P)) \qquad (4)$$

25   where Δf is the bandwidth, ΔR is a change in the
resistance of the GMR sensor, R is the resistance of the
GMR sensor, K is the thermal conductance of the GMR
sensor, Tb is the backplane or shield temperature, and
$P=I^2R=K(T-T_b)$.

30   Moreover, the thermoelectrical characteristics of
the read/write head may be modeled and cooling of the
read/write head may be controlled using the model of the

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thermoelectric characteristics of the read/write head.
Other uses of the measured thermal conductance may be
made without departing from the spirit and scope of the
present invention.

5   It is important to note that while the present
invention has been described in the context of a probe
apparatus coupled to a fully functioning data processing
system, those of ordinary skill in the art will
appreciate that the processes of the present invention
10   are capable of being distributed in the form of a
computer readable medium of instructions and a variety of
forms and that the present invention applies equally
regardless of the particular type of signal bearing media
actually used to carry out the distribution. Examples of
15   computer readable media include recordable-type media,
such as a floppy disk, a hard disk drive, a RAM, CD-ROMs,
DVD-ROMs, and transmission-type media, such as digital
and analog communications links, wired or wireless
communications links using transmission forms, such as,
20   for example, radio frequency and light wave
transmissions. The computer readable media may take the
form of coded formats that are decoded for actual use in
a particular data processing system.

The description of the present invention has been
25   presented for purposes of illustration and description,
and is not intended to be exhaustive or limited to the
invention in the form disclosed. Many modifications and
variations will be apparent to those of ordinary skill in
the art. The embodiment was chosen and described in
30   order to best explain the principles of the invention,
the practical application, and to enable others of
ordinary skill in the art to understand the invention for

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various embodiments with various modifications as are
suited to the particular use contemplated.